

Idaho Wetland Resources



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Background

During the Spring of 1992 the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) contracted with the Idaho Department of Fish & Game (IDFG) to develop a prioritized list of wetland areas in the state. This was done to satisfy the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Planning (SCORP) requirement of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965. Both programs are administered by IDPR with oversight from the National Park Service.

The Idaho Wetland Prioritization Plan is intended to be consistent with the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan, which provides a planning framework, criteria and guidance intended to meet the requirements of section 301 of the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (P.L. 99 645). In general, wetlands given priority consideration are to be those that provide a high degree of public benefits, that are representative of rare or declining wetlands types within an eco region, and that are subject to identifiable threat of loss or degradation.

The Emergency Wetlands Resources Act requires consistency between the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Planning (SCORP) process and the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan. The National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan provides states assistance in meeting the requirements under the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act so that wetlands are addressed as important recreation resources. As a result, IDPR asked that in addition to meeting other priority considerations, the IDFG develop a prioritized list of wetland areas in the state that are high in recreation value and could provide candidate areas for Land and Water Conservation Fund grant projects. In this document a prioritization is included that would be consistent with Idaho's Open Project Selection Process used by IDPR to allocate Land and Water Conservation Fund grant funds.

It is important to note here that this list does not cause a listed area to be acquired, it simply recognizes its importance. Before any actual acquisition can occur using LWCF, a significantly higher level of detail on any candidate area would be required. An agency or organization must list the area as a project. Then, typically, negotiation would be undertaken with any affected land owner and a cooperative purchase agreement would be established. Condemnation in most instances is not available to most agencies with an interest in wetlands and support for it is limited. Lastly, funding would have to be dedicated to the project.

Other means for protecting wetlands areas include, but are not limited to: Idaho Fish and Game Funds (federal, Pittman Robertson and Dingle Johnson funds), mitigation for roads and highways, mitigation for FERC licensing, conservation easements, and voluntary agreement with land owners.

Methodology

The Idaho Department of Fish & Game completed the 1992 study to identify wetlands areas in Idaho that are significant in wetlands conservation. In part, this study was intended to meet the needs of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) by providing a prioritized list of wetlands, consistent with SCORP criteria, which merit protection as determined by the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan.

Also, the study has been designed to provide information necessary and the capability to prioritize wetland areas to suit various interests. A computerized database that will provide outside agencies and the private sector with a central source of information regarding wetland sites statewide is under development. The database will be maintained and updated on a regular basis to meet anticipated requests for information.

Information currently available, but not yet entered into an accessible database, includes wetlands classification, size, ownership, potential partners for acquisition, preservation, recreation values, unique features including rare plants and animals, potential threats and the access availability for each site.

Preliminary Idaho Wetlands Listing

One of the first steps in the project was to develop a preliminary list of wetland sites in Idaho previously identified as significant by various agencies and/or proponent groups. This master list was created using existing lists of significant wetland sites in Idaho, including the 1988 SCORP, the 1987 EPA Idaho Wetlands List, the USF&W Priority Wetlands Listing and areas identified by the IDPR personnel.

Mapping the Sites

After the preliminary list was developed, each site was located on the Fish & Wildlife wetland classification maps to verify location, to estimate the size of the wetland area, and to identify the wetland types present. Unfortunately, Fish & Wildlife wetland classification maps had not yet been completed for a large portion of the state, primarily the central mountains. Wetland areas in regions not yet classified were located on the USGS topographic maps.

Wetland types were identified using criteria and classification schemes developed in the Framework for Classification of Wetlands and Deep water Habitats of the United States (1992 edition) by Cowardin, et al., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service handbook FWS/OBS 79/31.

After all locations identified on the preliminary list were located on topographic maps, classified using the USF&W Service wetland classification maps (where available), and rare plant, animal and/or fish records were reviewed, the material was organized by the seven IDFG regions. All material was sent to IDFG personnel in these regions for verification and additional input. IDFG personnel were also asked to identify other wetland areas they felt were significant.

Public Meetings

Public meetings were held in Regions 1-6 to insure public input to the process and data base, and to further identify additional wetland areas of concern. Two public meetings were held in Coeur d'Alene, and one each in Lewiston, Nampa, Jerome, Pocatello and Idaho Falls. Information generated from these meetings was largely a review of existing wetlands areas which have been included in the plan.

Wetland areas identified in the data base can be prioritized in many ways to maximize utility to a wide variety of potential users representing diverse interests. The electronic system was designed to allow the addition of new areas and/or information as it becomes available, and is supported by a large set of files which contain hard copies of data input, Fish & Wildlife wetland classification maps and/or topographic maps, and other information.

Suggested wetland additions or modifications to the data for specific sites should be forwarded to:

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2003-2007 Wetlands Update

In accordance with the 1993 Idaho Wetland Conservation Prioritization Plan, this section presents a prioritized list of the top ten wetland areas in Idaho that are high in recreation value and that have the potential for LWCF grant assistance. These areas are classified under the provisions of the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan.

Criteria for Wetlands for the 2003-2007 SCORTP

To qualify for acquisition under provisions of the National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan and the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a wetland must:

- 1). Include predominantly (50 percent or greater) wetland types which are rare or declining in the eco-region. Relevant types in this category that are found in Idaho are palustrine emergent (PEM), palustrine forested (PFO) and palustrine scrub-shrub (PSS).
- 2). Be threatened with loss and/or degradation.
- 3). Offer important values to society in two functional areas, such as, recognized recreation values, proximity (within 50 miles) of a major urban area or tourist destination, rare plants, animals or fish, flood protection, or unique wetland type.

Only acquisition of private property qualifies for matching funds or points in Idaho's SCORTP criteria.

If a wetland area meets the above criteria, it can qualify for up to 40 points under the category of Implementation of Wetlands Conservation Priorities in the State Assessment and Policy Plan Criteria (see Appendix).

Top Ten Prioritized Wetlands

Site Name	Database ID#	Points
Clark Fork delta marshes	107	40
Fernan Lake	137	35
Vineyard Creek/Canyon	404	35
South Fork Snake River Islands	602	35
Fisher & Lufkin Bottoms	603	35
Conant Valley	605	35
Targhee Creek	613	35
Henry's Lake	608	35
Upper Smith Creek	101	33
Cataldo Flats	131	33

Wetlands Priorities Rating Sheet

Implementation of Wetlands Conservation Priorities Criteria Rating Sheet

Area name and identification number _____

	Potential Points	Awarded Points
1. Assessment of recreation values		
High	5	
Medium	3	
2. Access status		
Access closed or difficult/impossible	5	
3. Assessment of unique features		
Water Supply/Quality	5	
Flood/Erosion Protection	5	
Rare plants	5	
Rare animals	5	
Rare fish	5	
Unique wetland in Idaho	5	
Archeological/Historic Site	5	
Within 50 miles of major urban area or tourist destination	5	
Other	5	
4. Status		
High degree of threat	5	
Medium degree of threat	5	
Total Points (not to exceed 40)		

Wetlands Database Goals

As stated earlier, a database has been established to provide the information necessary to prioritize wetland areas to suit various recreational and non-recreational interests. The database, known as the Idaho Wetlands Information System (IWIS), was designed to provide state, federal and local agencies and the private sector with a comprehensive central source of information regarding wetland sites in Idaho.

The IWIS database, located at Idaho Department of Fish and Game, consists primarily of hard copy maps and files. The original intention of the project was to convert this information to electronic format but funding did not become available as had been anticipated so only part of the information on hand has been incorporated into the database. Periodic updates to the IWIS database are currently available in hard copy format only, however other up-to-date wetlands information is available in electronic format in databases managed by the Idaho Conservation Data Center (CDC).

Five-Year Objectives

We propose four objectives to complete the original IWIS project and make it functional:

1. Finish populating the IWIS database with the wetlands information currently stored as hard copy files and on paper maps.
2. Update completed IWIS database with currently available wetlands information from other CDC electronic databases.
3. Annually update IWIS with new wetlands information as it becomes available.
4. Use the CDC's website to make mapped wetland information available by county and watershed using digital National Wetlands Inventory information as the base maps.

Task Descriptions

Task 1. Enter hard copy information currently stored in filing cabinets at IDFG into the IWIS electronic database.

Task 2. Digitize hard copy maps currently stored in filing cabinets at IDFG into GIS database.

Task 3. Provide seamless access to IWIS site information data and the GIS database using CDC's BIOTICS/HDMS data management system.

Task 4. Add program capacity on the CDC website to include the IWIS database.

Task 5. Provide annual updates to IWIS database.

Schedule

Tasks 1, 2, 3 and 4 will be accomplished within 12 months of the start of the project.

Task 5 will need to be done annually to maintain IWIS and keep it current.

Funding

The Conservation Data Center, in cooperation with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation's Outdoor Recreation Data Center, will seek grant funding to complete implementation of the IWIS database.